

Episode 6

Milagros (Host): Welcome everyone to Episode 6 of the H.E.A.R.T Podcast. In today's episode we deepen our understanding about the centrality of relationships in antiracist teaching based on the critical and indigenous perspectives of our guests. A central point in this conversation is how we can examine and realign ourselves not only in terms of our relationships with other humans, but with the land and life around us. It's a deep conversation everyone. Let's get started.

Omar (Host): We would like to begin by acknowledging that the land on which we gather is the territory of the Mohegan, Mashantucket Pequot, Eastern Pequot, Schaghticoke, Golden Hill Paugussett, Nipmuc, and Lenape Peoples, who have stewarded this land throughout the generations.

Milagros (Host): Thank you Omar for that land acknowledgement. Joining us on this episode is Dr. Sandy Grande, who is a Quecha National and a Professor of Political Science and Native American and Indigenous Studies at the University of Connecticut. Her research and teaching brings together Native American and Indigenous Studies with critical theory with the aim of developing more nuanced analyses of the colonial present. Her book, *Red Pedagogy*, is now in its 10th edition and a Portuguese translation will be published in Brazil this year.

Milagros (Host): We also have with us Dr. Chris Nelson who is of the Diné and Laguna Pueblo tribes of the southwest. She is an Assistant Professor of Higher Education at the University of Denver. Her research focuses on finance in higher education which she studies from the student perspective as well as policy. She blends critical theory and Indigenous perspectives and methods to explore the long-term impact of pre-college access programs.

Milagros (Host): Sandy and Chris, thank you for being here with us in this episode. We are so excited to have you as guests. This semester we've been focusing on intersectionality and how it can serve as a lens for antiracist teaching. We'd love to hear from both of you about how intersectionality shapes your teaching and the nuances that are important to you specifically given your own research about and with Indigenous communities? Sandy, want to get us started with this conversation?

Sandy (Guest): First, again, just thanks for the invitation to be in conversation with Dr. Nelson. I've been looking forward to this. Well, it, I mean, I, for a lot of my classes for the class that I taught this semester, I, as I often had students read [The Combahee River Collective Statement](#) where, at least that's sort of an earlier genealogy of the notion of intersectionality appears and I like their articulation of it in particular where it's really focused on interlocking, the inter, interlocking oppression or the interlocking nature of oppression. I think there's been so much unfortunate, like, confusion just as a consequence of what happens when you put scholarship out in the world and it gets taken up and some, I think, actually kind of purposeful about them is use of intersectionality.

Sandy (Guest): So, I think to kind of clear up that confusion, I often work with my students to just understand it as interlocking oppressions. And so not based on issues of identity, in other words. And for me, it's, it's Central, particularly in these times to think about. You know, the different histories of indigenous peoples, particularly what we now call the U.S. and how that's indicated with other histories. And specifically Black African American, African Diaspora peoples as those to me, which are the constitutive like, spaces of subordination and oppression in the formation of the Settler State. So, I think a lot about that crosswalk and then there's, you know, they also read a bit of [Lisa Lowe's](#) book and so, and, and she, as a sort of different valence of, like, what are the intimacy is across the different continents and the different kinds of modes of oppression.

Sandy (Guest): So, that's how, you know, one way in which I think about it and I think and then, obviously, like, after we have that conversation of how these various systems of oppression inform each other we, I mean, I always spend a little bit more time specifically on Settler Colonialism and the various violence associated with genocide removal, all the things that happened to Indigenous People.

Milagros (Host): That's really helpful. Sandy, because, you're right, in order to get to aspects of indigenous communities values, like, being in community accountability to the community relationships, it's important to understand that those things matter. In particular communities, but the way it gets left out of the way we operate has to do with these systems is the larger systems that devalue being in community, any relationship and seeing an equal kind of model for our humanity and for being in community. So thank you for that perspective, I want to ask you Chris, what are you what are you thinking? I don't know if you can connect with what Sandy has shared, or if you want to expand on, you know, other points: how does intersectionality shape your teaching particularly given your own research and your work with indigenous communities?

Chris (Guest): Sure, so I have my little notes here and I was like, oh, I think Sandy almost covered everything that I was about to say. Um, but I think one thing that I would add is whenever I think about and I appreciate Sandy, you offering the definition, because I think that is a really important part of understanding intersectionality is like, what lens are you coming from and what is the goal of it? Right? It's not, it's really about disrupting the systems that told power and in a way for teaching, I specifically think about how knowledge is constructed? How is it lived out? How is it valued? And whenever I think about intersectionality, I really try to understand how, how do I operate within the systems through my own identities right? So how do I navigate as an indigenous woman within? Like, which is technically like an oppressed identity right?

Chris (Guest): Where it has been impacted by systems of oppression. And how does that maybe orient my teaching with folks who come from different backgrounds and have different experiences but yet still focus a lot on the learning space and how to and understanding that because we have all these different backgrounds that we're going to understand and have to disentangle that process differently and some people's journeys are gonna be a lot longer and more intense because of maybe the privileged identities that they have this past year when I was teaching our race and racism and higher education, I integrated the cycle of socialization and cycle liberation from [Bobbie Harro](#) and she I feel like that work really helped

in particular are our White students, like, think about the layers that they have been socialized, and being able to then disentangle those pieces to understand how they have benefited from certain systems and how they need to then interrogate further and continually interrogate and how it's never done. This work is never completed.

Chris (Guest): And, I also take that on for myself, is that I'm always trying to understand, like, how do I show up in the classroom, what knowledge am I privileging and how am I actively trying to disrupt what I've even learned because I've grown up in the colonial education system right? I mean, that's how I learned what good knowledge is, what a good student is, and so how do I not replicate those spaces whenever I'm actually trying to teach and go through that very process oriented of, like, grading and, you know, giving students feedback. So, how do I make sure that I'm not replicating those systems?

Omar (Host): Yeah, I really appreciate the perspective that the both of you bring to the classroom and I, as a student, you know, just. Like I mentioned at the beginning, I'm a first year doctoral student, and it's been so interesting to essentially deconstruct these ideas and norms that have been instilled in me since really since I was like, in preschool. Um, that, that the, both of you touched on, you know, these ideas of, of capitalism of just emphasizing the individuals so much that I'm really curious to know the response that you get from students, because I've had my own disorienting dilemmas being in the classroom where it's like, whoa, this isn't what I learned previously. And it's and it's so great to know that there are various perspectives of looking, not only at the world, but different, like specific disciplines and so on, you know, if I were to be in your classroom. What would I experience or notice as a student and why do you feel that that's important to you as a teacher, and I'm wondering Chris, could you kick us off with that question, please?

Chris (Guest): Sure, that was actually something I was thinking about too. Um, because when I first started teaching I don't think I was as clear to the student's file was doing certain things and I would try to authentically show up as who I am as an indigenous woman and how I learn and how I want to foster a certain learning environment, such as collaboration, such as shared knowledge, and what I was noticing early on, was that there would be a lot of pushback and I would actually see that in my course evaluations or students, how they would engage with me and it was really a moment of, like, why, why am I doing this as a faculty member knowing that this is something I need to maintain to maintain my tenure and being able to say, okay, I need to be more clear and that's really what it kind of boiled down to was explaining to students. Like this is why I'm doing this, this is the orientation of where I'm coming from and I'll even name the challenge that I've seen because in my college I am the only indigenous woman here, and I would hear other colleagues in particular.

Chris (Guest): Those privileged identities have a very similar approach to how I was engaging and learning, but they were the ones getting the acknowledgement of being very progressive while on my end, I was getting seen in the classroom by someone who was disorganized, not clear enough, not being upholding a certain standard of what classes were being supposed to be and so what I would actually do is tell students that, like, I am doing this and, because I am a brown woman, I show up in this way that you will probably question why this is happening and if you feel uncomfortable, you can talk to me about

that. But ask yourself why? Like, why are you feeling this tension? What within your background, and you're learning, has privilege certain ways of always doing something a certain way and now I'm pushing back on that a little bit and we can work through it and I'd always claim and I always say that I'm very flexible and trying to meet the student's needs, but I'm also very clear in that. I want people to feel challenged and that I, myself am constantly thinking about that, too, is like, when I'm in a learning space, when I'm in a knowledge sharing space that if I feel 100% comfortable in what I'm doing, then I need a question even like, what am I saying and am I feeling like I've arrived right? But I don't want to feel that way. I want to know that I'm always trying my best and trying to push myself to think in different ways.

Sandy (Guest): Thank you, Chris, thanks for naming the, you know, very familiar struggles I think of women and faculty of color in the classroom. Well, probably the first thing they notice is I'm really bad at math. To add anything, it's like, 99% sure I'll get something wrong and in some ways, like just discreet information. So I share with them that I have, like, mild dyslexia, and then ADHD, and the kinds of, um, you know, challenges that those present it to me, both as learner and as a teacher, but I invite them into that space. I share it with them and you know, they keep me on task. You know, I tell a lot of stories, I didn't realize I did until my students shared that. I guess I had back-to-back classes once, and then some students saw me crossing or passing the quad or something like that and they said, "we heard you told them this other story and we didn't get that story." And I'm like, "oh my god, they talk about my stories!" And then I realized that I must tell a lot of stories in the class, but in a more serious way, I would say that they, they, they have a sense because I make it explicit.

Sandy (Guest): Um, but also that it needs the course that they're, that there isn't just sort of different perspectives that that that on and many levels we're talking about competing moral visions of the world and so you can't continue to have this. I mean, to use [Glen Coulthard's language](#) is like, for Indigenous Peoples to live Capitalism must die. So you can't just be like, well, we can do this and then, like, they can do that over there. And then we can just appreciate each other. It doesn't work that way. And so trying to, like, um, I guess on some level, make that something that can be legible and something that they can sort of take on, because it can be overwhelming. I think, is helping them to understand what it means to really be in relation to each other and to learn and work in collectivities. I try not to use the language of group work because I don't actually think that captures what it is.

Sandy (Guest): Although I do say, and probably every class I've taught since I don't maybe the beginning I've always had what I call Theory Groups. A lot, well not a lot, eh, maybe, I'm a bit of a theory wonk, so some of the reading is very challenging. And so I just say, listen, you know, you'll get even when it isn't challenging, if we all read the same book, we're going to get different things from it. And so, reading is a social practice in my opinion. Um, and so because they still usually start off in the beginning. In a sense that they have to perform as an individual so they try to get the right answer and come up with a smart whatever. And especially when it is something that's theoretically challenging, they get very afraid to, like, have a wrong answer.

Sandy (Guest): So, I noticed in one class recently, for example, rather than really dig into the concept of what the author was saying, they would immediately move to like, that reminds me of this time in

kindergarten or that. And I said stick, I want you to really stick with what is written and we literally had to do it together. And then this one woman was just like, I don't understand what it says, and I was like, okay, well. Let's literally try this together. Let's read the sentence word by word, and then we slowed it down to that sort of granular level. And the whole group was with her.

Sandy (Guest): You know, she was, she was like, oh, my God, I understand it. And and so it was like, that was another transformative moment for me as a teacher, and that I realized. You know, and this is true of myself that reading as a practice is something we need to practice. And then they and then we moved from there to next week in groups they went out into different places and I could hear them actually reading to each other. And it really sort of warmed my heart and then they figured it out together and I'm like, okay. And some did probably have a sense of what they were reading prior, maybe, like a deeper sense of it, I guess, in terms of the actual kind of theoretical discourse of it and the analysis of it. While others struggled, but they were all surprised. There was also this other student.

Sandy (Guest): That was very versed in reading theory and so was a little skeptical about the exercise and she just felt. You know, probably a little over confident that this was all like, not new to her. And it was actually she came up to me after class to talk about how much she had learned from her peers by doing reading in that way and that she was surprised and that was another nice moment. So, I think it takes rather than to just have an expectation, something I've learned as a teacher. Rather than having an expectation that they kind of work in these theory groups to kind of understand is that really it's a practice and it's something that we have to do together in that.

Sandy (Guest): You know, sometimes you do as a class, we'll just read out loud like, you know, like we did in 3rd grade you have maybe take a sentence. And I have found that this sort of little reading practice has often opened the door to other ways in which students understand themselves as a collective learning environment that transcends the notion of they might, you might, previously held notions, I think about group work. That's really not about group work. It's about building relationships with each other.

Milagros (Host): Sandy, that's really interesting. Um, I have so many questions spurring in my teacher head right now. I'm thinking about how students are responding to what it sounds like you're creating in your classroom. A learning, a collective learning experience, right? And knowing that. It's not a collected learning experience so that each individual leaves knowing more. But that, by virtue of engaging in collective learning, the whole of the collective also learns something new. I wonder how that's how that has happened in your classrooms over time. How have students responded to that over time? Are they always on board for it, how do they respond to that change? Because that's a very different model for teaching than, as long as each of you understand the point we move on, you know?

Sandy (Guest): Yeah, it's probably been the most challenging in the Zoom classroom situation. I think we got there a little bit. I mean, it's always a journey, you know, I'm sure some state for some students that never quite. Comes together for them, but overall, I would say. Because it's also about accountability, right? So, I even say to them: look. Once they have a performance into this, and sometimes it takes switch stuff around, cause not all groups can form a group right away and some do immediately. And I

never know what the factors are. So, it takes some shifting around typically, but they tend to kind of stabilize by the end. But once they, you know, I also do a lot of organizing, so I think it comes from that as well.

Sandy (Guest): And so organizing is its own, kind of has its own kind of pedagogy in some ways, well, I don't need to go down that road too much, but it has its own sort of pedagogy and I think. You know, organizers, as an example, they often get frustrated because there's often the expectation that everybody has to do everything in the group. And then, at some point, you have a conversation about why that's an expectation. When some as I already mentioned, like, some students are like, excellent at reading theory. Other students might be good, just like, administrative, like, organize taking the notes or whatever. Everyone kind of has a superpower. And it's usually when you can make those. Superpowers explicit to each other that a group, that helps the group run more efficiently if not effectively, and so once they start learning little things about what it means to be a group, I said, you know, some of you, one of you might come in and you're like, you have 10 exams a week before. You're like, I did that, I skimmed the reading. I'm like, you need to show up and be like, listen, I skimmed the reading 5 minutes before class. Can you guys help me to understand? And then somebody may have had no exams or no papers and they read it. You know, chapter and verse, and everybody in between. And so that once they learn that they don't just show up and perform. But it's a space to be accountable to each other. I think that helps them, I guess acculturate into that, as you said, Milagros, it can be radically different from what they've had. I don't make the assumption, sometimes they do have some students have lots of experience organizing as an example, but if it is different from them, that usually helps, because they understand it can be a strategic place. And it should be, I mean, groups and activities, that's the whole point is to support each other. Even when we talk about not self care, but squad care, I mean, we sort of do it all and so they have to kind of figure that out.

Milagros (Host): Right, no, and absolutely if you think about students who may identify as Indigenous they might actually come with a skill set and knowledge around this collective learning and accountability, or even students who are organizers, and their local community might have that knowledge. I think. What happens is that often in the classroom that lived experience and lived knowledge isn't invited as a way of learning in traditionally White spaces. Or even in spaces that are not necessarily exclusively White. They're historically colonial in nature and so they practice this exclusion of this lived knowledge that could be hopeful for collective learning, but that we omit as a possibility. Traditionally from the classroom.

Milagros (Host): So, I think it's really powerful that you create the space for people to hone in on their superpowers, like you said, and to leverage it for the collective good, it just sounds empowering and as a result, there's a collective good, but it sounds from where you're saying Sandy, that there's also this individual growth. That happens for your students and that makes me connect with something that you actually wrote in your book [Red Pedagogy](#), where you ask your readers to examine their own communities, policies, and practices. Not only to understand who they are, but potentially to reinvent themselves and I wondered. How you might carry that out in your classroom or. If you would give it some advisor suggestion to other faculty who are interested in teaching in ways that are antiracist and

decolonizing teaching, you know, what would you offer them as a way to, as an entry point for this self examination that might help them reinvent themselves toward liberation.

Sandy (Guest): Yeah, it's both I would say it's both dialectical and dialogical, so it's not just the self but it's the self in relation to, right? And so I haven't done this for a while, but I used to ask students somewhere in the beginning, like, who are your people? And, you know, for Native students that's. You know other students of color, but, um. But it's often because of colonization and the kind of violence of assimilation, a lot of White students think they don't have people. And it's like, listen, you all have people, I don't know who they are, you know, Star Trek people. And it's not the same as like, belonging to an Indigenous Nation, but you all have, like, and if they don't know, then I say that's your assignment between now and the end of the semester, like, who are your people? And to really think about that, and then, like, how, you know. There's conversation and a lot of indigenous communities about, you know, not just who you claim, but who claimed you.

Sandy (Guest): Who are you accountable to? Who do you belong to? Who, and what do you belong to? Like, we all belong to the land and to the water, right? So. And it and I guess it's if it's a project, it's like, doing what you can to decenter the human. Not just the individual, but the human, you know, we're such a human obsessed society, even in the quote unquote now there's this new valence of radical literature on the post human, which just makes me think you're still centering the human if you're human or post and it's still about humanism. So, and it's just so interesting. It's such a challenge for non-Indigenous populations to really think beyond the human. To think beyond this world and catch, you know we try to be and play, always 3 different worlds at the same time. And so, space and time are really much more fluid and that's embedded in the language itself. And so it might be a tall ask to decenter the human, but, in all honesty, when climate scientists give us about 10 years before we're at a point of irreversible damage. You know, if not now, when? You know, if you're not going to decenter the human now, when?

Omar (Host): I have to say that, something that stuck out to me, uh, from both the answers that that Chris and Sandy that you've both provided is just I'm. Just, how beautiful you both take the time. To actually. Share this information with students and push them and challenge them to think differently. I think, in a way, you're almost practicing what you are, and you are exactly practicing what you're what you're preaching towards anti capitalism. Well, when I think of capitalism, I think. Go go, go no brakes,

Omar (Host): Sandy, as you mentioned profit incentive all the time like, is it worth doing? And most of the time it's is there money to be made if so then we should pursue it. And so I think over time I come to learn that, as a student, and as a teacher, like the greatest gift, just as a human being the greatest gift that we can give each other is time and you both take the time. And you bestow that upon your students, and if they struggle. Again, you take the time to kind of walk them through. The process, whereas I've had so many experiences. I wonder if they've been tied to capitalism in this. Um, desire to just focus on the individual that if someone's not keeping up, then they're left behind and that in a way that damages the group, and specifically that individual as well and not, you know.

Keeping up and staying with the group and. You know, Chris, I'm actually really excited to ask you this next question, just because I, in my previous role, uh, prior to starting graduate school, I was actually a

program coordinator for a college prep program and it, it was that specific job, um, in addition to previous roles that I've had an education that steered me towards, uh, pursuing graduate school. And so it. It pivoted me in so many different ways. Um, but specific to you, Chris, I'm curious to hear more about the impact that critical theory and indigenous perspectives and methods have on how pre-college access programs are conceptualized and delivered. Do you mind sharing more about your work on this and how it informs your teaching?

Chris (Guest): Sure, I think it actually ties in well with what Sandy was saying earlier about the human and understanding us as part of a larger, um, and very forceful, um, dynamic. I had this opportunity to start engaging in pre-college STEM when I was a grad student at University of Arizona. I helped coordinate the Native American Science and Engineering Program, and it was, it was during that time, when I really started to, um, had some really great scholars that supported me, Indigenous scholars in particular [Dr. Mary Jo Tippeconnic Fox](#) at the University of Arizona at the time. They were really encouraging and centering Indigenous knowledges and perspectives. And so what leaning into works like [Deloria and Wildcat's Power and Place](#), [Dr. Gregory Cajete's Look to the Mountain](#), all the way just 2 different narratives that Indigenous people have written through their own experiences. And being able to say, how do we blend these very grounded ideas of place into the curriculum whenever we're working in particular with native youth and, and so. Through the years, I've just been able to kind of continue that thread in different ways. And most recently at the University of Denver, whenever I came here, I, um, I, we actually or I wasn't, it wasn't a cluster hire, but there just so happened to be another indigenous faculty member in the Physics Department that got hired.

Chris (Guest): Then they hired a new Native American kind of support manager and then we had, like, 3 or 4 Indigenous grad students, and we all just collectively started supporting each other. And then it turned into, like, well, let's do something like, we need something to keep us here. That's meaningful. And we had worked already and all of us had children and so we had kids in the school systems, and we were seeing the shortcomings that they were facing. So, we reached out to the different Indian Ed programs and started to conceptualize, what does it mean to support STEM now? From a standpoint of, like, oh, go into stem because you can make a lot of money and there's a lot of great careers, but really thinking about how we can, we can reconnect to our indigenous ways of knowing through an educational space. And so what we did was we started to.

Chris (Guest): We focus on place based learning, and there's a few sites across Denver that have a cultural significance for Indigenous people. One mainly being [Tall Bull Memorial Park](#), which is south of Denver, and we really wanted to have our students be able to go out there, engage with different elders and knowledge keepers to be able to think like, okay, how does science actually, how has it pre-existed the notion of science, right? How have these concepts, how have our ancestors always been mathematicians, been scientists, knowing these different ways of engaging with the Earth and understanding the Earth and so it was really an amazing time because we had a scientist [Dr. Cisneros](#). We had a Native American scholar, [Dr. Angel Hinzo](#), and then myself, being in education. It's like, we just had this really like a blending of different perspectives, coming together and our delivery and are just our personalities really meshed well.

Chris (Guest): And we were able to bring on about 13 students on to the DU campus and help them help them, not help them, but bring them into the space of seeing what can be done in terms of teaching science. And I, and we continued this for about a year and a half with different community events, and in the end, it really culminated down to was a weekend activity where we had a local elder who had some eagles that he needed to process and he offered to bring in some of our students to teach them about this practice and the sacredness of it and it was probably one of the most life changing experiences I had because we had another colleague who was a doctoral student in engineering, and they had the eagle kind of, they were respectfully treating the eagle but then they were talking about flight and force and really showing the students, how majestic and how special this bird is, and the students were just sitting there, you know, being able to really touch and respectfully handle the birds in a way that we're guided by a lot of elders, and I thought in my head, this is how students this is how we have always learned as Indigenous people and the ability to have our native youth learn from that was really a special moment for a lot of us, and we had community members that weren't necessarily affiliated with DU or didn't even have children. They just wanted to be there, right?

Chris (Guest): So, this momentum that we really started to build was very special and the, the, the whole idea behind it was, how do we engage our community in learning and teaching and sharing of knowledge all the while for us it was very like, we just need a reason to stay within the academy, because it it can be very draining and while the community work is even more intense at times it really brought a lot of special moments in time to us. And it also allows us the ability to think about what within the academy limits and makes it challenging to do that work but then how do we just support each other to do the work? Right? And to not make it so much of a challenge to then integrate it with theory and knowledge so that way, when we are writing our tenure documents, like, there is a way to connect it to this tenure process. And for me, that was really helpful because we had a lot of elders that helped us, kind of conceptualize it.

Chris (Guest): And yeah. So I think in terms of that teaching moment for myself has actually helped me to further my graduate courses that I teach. So this quarter, I'm teaching a Decolonizing Higher Ed class, and within that work, we had some really great grad students that have been helping me, and they would, together, what we did was we created a 8-day week and so we have everyone on an 8-day week, and it's based upon Dr. Cisneros's work as a physicist in time and how we have the certain classes, we still meet during the normal, like Wednesday night class time but there's other tasks that students have to do and we really disrupt that moment and that notion of participation, like, oh, you got to do all the work and on time, you know, but it's really about, what is your intent behind the week and what is it that, how can these activities that we've kind of outlined, support that learning process and within those spaces, we've also talked about what grading means how to how do we disrupt this idea of A, B, C, D. An A student is a good student, an excellent student, and so forth and talking a little bit more about how do we engage in conversations of antiracism, anticolonialism, you know, to be able to really. Have a life changing experience, and I'm just really grateful that I've been able to have that space to, to live that out and to be able to think about the different types of ways that we can engage in knowledge sharing and I believe our students are really, you know. Their willingness to do that is really the reason why we're able to, right?

Chris (Guest): Because I was really afraid that they would be like, “no, I joined this class because I want to read, you know, all these articles and I want to talk about it. I want to get it,” right?

Chris (Guest): But I was like, okay, we're going to do a little bit of that but we're going to really do it. Like, we're gonna do the work of what it would mean to think about decolonizing higher ed spaces.

Milagros (Host): Wow, I just want to be in both of your classes. You're both inspiring professors and your students are so fortunate to have you, as we close out our conversation for today, I'm wondering if you could share. What is one piece of advice that you would give to someone who's interested in, at least what I'm seeing something in common across multiple things you have in common one thing I'm hearing from both of you is the power of sharing knowledge and making that the norm of the learning experience, and I wonder if you have a piece of advice, you would give to someone who wants to try to center that approach in their teaching? What would that be? What would you say to them? Chris, can we start with you?

Chris (Guest): Sure, I'm trying to in terms of, like, just engaging in the work and I have some sticky notes I put on my, around my computer to just kind of remind myself and there's two that really stick to me a lot is one that says, “honoring your family and yourself in this process.” And whenever I feel challenged, and whenever I'm feeling, maybe even insecure in this process, it's like, I have to go to the thoughts of my grandmother, right? Like my grandparents and asking myself. Like, does this make her proud? Would this make her feel like she did her job? And also my mother too, and I think to me, that's just a way to know that. Even if I messed up, even if I maybe had a misstep that I know that they would still be proud of me is more important than if it's always making 100% sense all the time. And so, for me, I would say that finding those, those, those orienting grounding people in your life, and, and making sure that they stay at a really prominent side of who you are, I think that's important.

Milagros (Host): Thank you Chris. Sandy, what are your thoughts? What's a piece of advice you would give?

Sandy (Guest): Yeah, wow. I mean, similarly to Chris, I think on some level, if you hold as the only learning outcome, if people are learning to be better relatives in the broader sense of that word and then for teachers or folks who need something a bit more pragmatic I would just say, you know, what is the, to never teach anything, which you can't answer the question of, like, what is at stake? What does that stake? You have to know the answer to that question. If nothing's at stake then don't teach it. And maybe a third thing is, like, there's always a way, I think, to connect the classroom to the world beyond. So, like, if you're kind of, in Chris's example, like, if you're creating antiracist curriculum, create antiracist curriculum for someone who needs it, or make it an actual, you know, inform policy somewhere. Show up to, and with, you know, a community organization that needs and has asked for support whatever it is like, there's a way to make, I think, to connect beyond an outside of the classroom. I think that that's a good way to reground things.

Omar (Host): Well, thank you so much to you both for those incredible answers. And with that, we'd like to close out for today's conversation. Uh, thank you. Dr. Grande and Dr. Nelson for joining us today. For the powerful words of wisdom you have shared with us today for broadening our perspectives and for shining light on the urgency of collectivity. We truly appreciate what you do in and outside of the classroom to disrupt colonial education and we're so grateful for your time today. For your willingness to share the wisdom with us and our audience today and really just uplifting the amazing work that you both do and echoing Milagros's words, I'm so jealous of the students in your classroom. But, I hope that this isn't the last time that we all come together in conversation. So, uh, with that, thank you. Thank you so much.

Omar (Host) We would like to extend our gratitude to Dr. Sandy Grande and Dr. Chris Nelson for sharing their insights as they relate to indigeneity and antiracist teaching. Thanks to them, we were able to explore notions of collectivity, community, and grounding our work in relation to those around us. We also appreciate their sense of urgency related to societal problems such as climate change, in which they encourage us to ask ourselves "if not now, when?"

Milagros (Host): We also want to thank the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and the Office for Diversity and Inclusion at the University of Connecticut for their support in making this podcast possible. "Because it takes a village and it takes heart."

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